

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Press and Public Affairs Office as of:

Monday, 3 April 2006

The press clips are produced Monday to Friday.
If you are aware of omissions or have any comments or suggestions please contact
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Special Court for Sierra Leone
Defence Office

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 31 March 2006

Defence Office Moves to Ensure Fair Trial Rights for Mr. Charles Taylor

On Wednesday, 29 March 2006, the Registrar of the Special Court for Sierra Leone informed the Principal Defender about the arrival of Mr. Charles Taylor, a detainee, at the Detention Facility of the Court.



Under Article 17 of the Statute of the Court and international criminal law, Mr. Taylor is entitled to a fair trial and is presumed innocent until proved guilty in a competent judicial tribunal. Though he now stands indicted for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, these charges do not constitute evidence of his guilt beyond all reasonable doubt.

Photo: Principal Defender Vincent O. Nmehielle

The Principal Defender is mandated to ensure, and will work towards ensuring, that his rights are fully respected in accordance with the requirements of the various instruments of the Court and under international human rights law.

Lawyers from the Defence Office met with Mr. Taylor on the morning of Thursday, 30 March 2006. Mr. Taylor is in fairly good health and is in good spirits. He cooperated with the lawyers who explained his rights under Article 17 of the Statute and addressed personal matters as well as detention-related issues.

Mr. Taylor is considering possibilities in respect of his legal representation. It is his right to be tried in his presence, and to defend himself in person or through legal assistance of his own choosing. He also has the right to be assigned counsel if he is found to not have sufficient means to pay for it.

#END

The Special Court is an independent tribunal established jointly by the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone. It is mandated to bring to justice those who bear the greatest responsibility for atrocities committed in Sierra Leone after 30 November 1996. To date, the Prosecutor has indicted eleven persons on various charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. Ten indictees are currently in the custody of the Court.

Awoko
3 April 2006

Civil societies disagree with Taylor's transfer



Charles Taylor

By Betty Milton

Members of various Civil Society Organisations in Sierra Leone, Friday strongly opposed the transfer of the trial of former Liberia President Charles Taylor to the

International Criminal Court in The Hague.

At a briefing by the Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court Desmond de Silva, which was held at the Courtroom, members stated unequivocally that there is no need for the trial to be done

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Civil societies disagree with Taylor's transfer

From Front Page

in The Hague when the crimes committed by Charles Taylor were done in Sierra Leone.

The Civil Society activists argued that the issue of security should not be the reason the international community wants the matter to be transferred, because Chief Norman and the other Sierra Leoneans are facing trial presently without no problems.

They further stated that the victims want to see the trial done in their presence.

The Chief Prosecutor in his response explained that the Hague issue is just an option while answering that a letter by Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf had given the reason that for security to remain in the sub region the

trial should be transferred to the Hague. Mr Da Silva maintained and they have not reached an agreement yet.

He disclosed that according to the rules of procedure it enables to court to sit outside Sierra Leone in case of any instability. The court he said is different from other international tribunals as it is set up in the very country the atrocities are committed.

The Chief prosecutor further maintained that he will be satisfied if Taylor is tried here but he would not want Taylor' lawyers to succeed in an appeal on certain grounds.

Mr. de Silva informed the people that by Monday Taylor will make his first appearance at the Special Court where the new 11

count indictments will be read to him "and he will have the chance to answer to the pleas." Technically he said "the trial will start from that point." However he said, the full gravity of the first indictment are still in the new one which includes crimes against humanity and serious violations of international humanitarian law including sexual slavery and mutilations.

The Chief Prosecutor stressed that he believes that the victims have the right to see the perpetrators of serious crimes be brought to justice.

Mr. Desmond de Silva commended the people of Sierra Leone as they stood their grounds for Taylor to be brought to task for crimes committed "this is a clear indication that international justice takes a long time and Monday is the start for that bad man to start his trial" he said.

New Citizen
3 April 2006

Johnson-Sirleaf Requested Taylor's Trial Abroad



Johnson Sirleaf

By Antoinette Moseray
Special Court indictee. Charles Taylor, former President of Liberia was on Thursday allowed to talk to his wife in Monrovia when he informed his wife that he was healthy and that his

wife should inform friends and relatives that he was alive.

Charles Taylor, who was in Nigeria after he stepped down from the presidency of Liberia in 2003, was extradited by the Nigerian government

to Liberia and in turn the Liberian authorities handed him over to UNMIL, the United Nations peacekeeping force in Liberia who ferried him to the Special Court premises in

Cont. back page

JOHNSON SIRLEAF

efforts in both the Liberian rebel war and the Sierra Leone rebel war led to the deaths and mutilations of innocent citizens of the two countries.

The debate as to whether Charles Taylor should be tried in Freetown or not intensified over the weekend which caused the Special Court Prosecutor, Desmond de Silva, to clarify certain developments to civil society groups in Freetown.

Addressing civil society groups at the Court Room No. 2 of the Special Court on Friday, Desmond de Silva explained that when he assumed the office of Prosecutor, the first thing he did was to promise himself and the people of Sierra Leone that, Charles Taylor would be arrested and be kept in Special Court detention facilities.

He further stated that Charles Taylor would be given an opportunity to listen to the charges preferred against himself, after which he would be at liberty to plead guilty or not guilty.

As to why the charges against Charles Taylor have been reduced from 17 to 11, Desmond de Silva explained, "the reason for amending the indictment is to provide room for a more focused trial and a speedy end to the trial."

As he explained why it has been suggested that Charles Taylor be taken to The Hague for trial, Desmond de Silva further explained that the President of Liberia, Helen Johnson Sirleaf, who requested President Obasanjo to hand over Charles Taylor to Liberia is of the opinion that it would make the

outside West Africa.

Desmond de Silva paid tribute to President Helen Johnson Sirleaf when he said that without President Sirleaf's call for the arrest of Charles Taylor and without her courage and quest for justice, Charles Taylor would not have been at the Special Court today.

He emphasized that it was Helen Johnson Sirleaf, the Liberian President, who later pleaded with the President of the Special Court that Charles Taylor should not be tried in Sierra Leone because she suspects that his trial in Sierra Leone has the potential to destabilize her country.

Desmond de Silva further revealed that after President Sirleaf came up with a plea to try Charles Taylor outside Sierra Leone. The Hague option is now being considered but noted that if it is to be considered, information should be shared with the victims if for no other reason but to ensure that the victims have knowledge as to how justice will be done.

Desmond de Silva said personally he would be quite content if Taylor is tried in Sierra Leone, but then of course, the views of others, including the view of the Liberian president are also important.

"If Charles Taylor is tried here in Sierra Leone and something that can undermine the security of Liberia happens, the Special Court would be held responsible because President Helen Johnson Sirleaf has publicly expressed the fear of chaos and anarchy in her country," Desmond de Silva explained.

However, Desmond de Silva noted that in the end, it is the responsibility of the international community to determine where Charles Taylor should be tried adding, "the decision is not mine. I cannot stop the international community from paying attention to Johnson Sirleaf's request."

However, after he would have taken his plea today, it can be safely concluded that whether in Freetown or in The Hague, Charles Taylor's trial has commenced in earnest.

Democrat
3 April 2006

Popular Call for Taylor's trial in Sierra Leone

By Abayomi Tejan

Contrary to speculations that Taylor's trial would definitely be at The Hague, the Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court, Desmond Da Silver, denies that this is the official position of the President of the Court. 'Do not believe anyone who tells you that,' he warned.

Mr. Silver says it is 'just an option,' but that he would consider the views of the civil society and the local press as to the security implications of trying Taylor in Freetown. The

prosecutor says the concerns Ellen Johnson Sirleaf holds are worthy of contemplation by the UN Security Council.

'Mrs. Sirleaf knows much about Liberian politics and the mood of

Liberians generally, and her views must be given serious consideration' says Da Silver, adding that it is not up to him to dictate to the international community and the UN Security Council. "Without her call for Taylor's

extradition from Nigeria, Taylor would not be here," he emphasized. Participants at the hurriedly convened press conference past Friday were of the view that trying Taylor elsewhere would throw the wrong signals to the local communities still grappling with the relevance and significance of the Special Court.

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Popular Call for Taylor

From Page 1

There was consensus among major civil society groups to try Taylor here in Sierra Leone; taking Taylor to The Hague would deprive victims of the pleasure and consolation of actually seeing the perpetrators dealt with accordingly, and would definitely subvert the intent and purport of setting up a court in the country where the crimes were committed.

On the question of security risk because of Taylor's presence in Sierra Leone, the general reaction from the participants was that if indeed there are present dangers, then trying Taylor elsewhere makes no difference, and makes poor logic to have Hinga Norman and others tried here under similar conditions Liberia presently finds herself.

The Prosecutor informed the press that Taylor would make his initial appearance today and the charges read out to him. He would also take a plea. "Technically, the trial starts then," says Silver.

This is the first time in international criminal justice system that a Court sits in the locus of the crime, and Mr. Silver considers the model as the 'preferable' one for future prosecutions of perpetrators of similar crimes.

The Prosecutors points out that delaying Taylor's trial would likely provoke an application for bail from the defense, a privilege that the prosecutor is unwilling to countenance for, as he put it, 'This very bad man.'

The Prosecutor advised the press and civil society to make their views known to the Security Council.



Security Council Meetings Coverage

Security Council
5406th Meeting (PM)

SC/8684
31 March 2006

(more)

SECURITY COUNCIL EXTENDS UN MISSION IN LIBERIA UNTIL 30 SEPTEMBER,

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTING RESOLUTION 1667 (2006)

**Reaffirms Intention to Authorize Secretary-General to Redeploy Troops
Between UN Mission in Liberia and Operation in Côte d'Ivoire as Needed**

The Security Council today, acting under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) until 30 September.

Council Resolution

The full text of resolution 1667 (2006) reads, as follows:

"The Security Council,

"Recalling its previous resolutions and statements by its President concerning the situations in Liberia and the subregion, in particular its resolutions 1626 of 19 September 2005 and 1638 of 11 November 2005,

"Welcoming the Secretary-General's report of 14 March 2006 (S/2006/159),

"Welcoming the inauguration of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and the installation of the newly elected Liberian Government,

"Emphasizing that significant challenges remain in completing reintegration and repatriation of ex-combatants and restructuring of the Liberian security sector, as well as maintaining stability in Liberia and the subregion,

"Expressing its appreciation for the continuing support of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) for the Liberian Peace process, as well as for financial and other assistance provided by the international community,

"Welcoming the transfer of former President Charles Taylor to the custody of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and *renewing* its expression of appreciation to Nigeria and its President, Olusegun Obasanjo, for providing for former President Taylor's temporary stay in Nigeria,

"Determining that the situation in Liberia continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security in the region,

"Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations,

"1. Decides that the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) shall be extended until 30 September 2006;

"2. *Decides* to extend the provisions of paragraph 6 of resolution 1626 (2005) for the period specified in paragraph 1 above;

"3. *Reaffirms* its intention to authorize the Secretary-General to redeploy troops between UNMIL and UNOCI on a temporary basis in accordance with the provisions of resolution 1609 (2005), as may be needed;

"4. *Takes note* of the letter of the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council dated 22 March 2006 (S/2006/184), and *expresses* its determination to review the tasks and the troop level of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) by the end of April 2006, with a view to a decision on its reinforcement;

"5. *Requests* the Secretary-General to review his recommendations for a drawdown plan for UNMIL and to present further recommendations in his next regular report to the Council on UNMIL's progress with the implementation of its mandate;

"6. *Decides* to remain actively seized of the matter."

United Nations

31 March 2006

REMARKS MADE BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OUTSIDE THE SECURITY COUNCIL

(unofficial transcript)

Q: [inaudible] Charles Taylor.....

SG: Well, I don't know how the [Security] Council will act this morning, but I wouldn't be surprised if they do take some action on it.

Q: That's what you're waiting for them for?

SG: Well, I think it's been a fast-moving development and I'm sure the Council, which has been following it very, very closely, will pronounce itself -- indicate some action -- particularly in the next phase on the Taylor issue.

Q: And you think that's a wise move to move it to The Hague?

SG: I think everybody agrees it to be wiser to do that. Thank you very much.

Thisday (Nigeria)

3 April 2006

Sierra Leone : Taylor to appear in court today

Barring any hitches, history will be made today as former Liberian president, Mr. Charles Taylor, becomes the first African ex-president to stand trial for war crime charges in a United Nations-backed Special War Crimes Tribunal in Sierra Leone.

Though Taylor may ultimately stand trial in The Hague, court officials and diplomats have said it may take several weeks before he is moved.

He is expected to plead not guilty to eleven indictments for atrocities committed during Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war. Taylor is accused by the special court of smuggling arms to Sierra Leone's RUF rebels – notorious for hacking the limbs off women and children – in return for "blood diamonds".

Moves to transfer the former warlord to The Hague for trial is fueled by fears that his presence could undermine stability in the volatile West African region where he still has pockets of support.

"Sierra Leone has gone through a very nasty war, Liberia has gone through an equally nasty war. Guinea has problems, Ivory Coast has some problems," Sierra Leone's Information Minister, Mr. Septimus Kaikai, said.

"The trauma that people went through in this country, they are still going through, both psychological and otherwise. If there is the perception that there is a slight possibility that that might take place again, prevention is better than cure," he said.

Already, Britain has circulated a UN Security Council resolution that would authorize Taylor's transfer to the Netherlands, and is expected to be adopted early this week.

The resolution is only one condition for Taylor's transfer. Other measures include ensuring his security and other facilities in The Hague, and that he would be returned.

The prosecution will have to decide whether to fly witnesses to Europe, many of them villagers who have never even visited the capital and who will need interpreters to translate from at least six local languages, court officials said.

Many Sierra Leoneans were overjoyed when they saw Taylor helicoptered into the special court last week Wednesday after almost three years exile in Calabar the Cross River State capital. He was arrested trying to cross the border to Cameroon.

Sierra Leonean armed police patrol the barbed wire perimeter fence around the compound where Taylor is being held and a rapid reaction force of Irish and Swedish UN soldiers are on standby to back up the Mongolian UN force guarding the court.

Diplomats say that the UN should guarantee security for now, but they say the risk becomes higher the longer Taylor remains.

"The problem with Freetown is that it sits in a region with porous borders. It would be easy for his sympathizers to get in and they would be hard to track down," said one senior diplomat in Freetown.

Meanwhile, Taylor's lawyer has called on "goodwilled people" to pay for his defence. "Mr Taylor will not plead guilty because the facts are there," Richard Flomo, one of the lawyers representing him, said. "Even if they take the case to The Hague and they are transparent, Mr Taylor will be acquitted.

"Mr Taylor is broke. He does not have money to plead a case," Flomo told Reuters. "We hope goodwilled people and other institutions will come and help so that we can plead his case.

"Right now there is no money," he added.

Taylor rose to power with a 1989 rebellion in Liberia to overthrow ex-president Samuel Doe. The uprising turned into a 14-year on-off civil war in which 250,000 people were killed before Taylor elected president in 1997 left for exile in 2003.

Reuters

2 April 2006

African warlord Taylor faces court in Sierra Leone

By Nick Tattersall

FREETOWN (Reuters) - One of Africa's most feared warlords, former Liberian leader Charles Taylor, is due in court in Sierra Leone on Monday charged with backing rebels who mutilated and raped civilians during the country's civil war.

Taylor faces 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity for helping to launch and fuelling more than a decade of conflict in Sierra Leone, in which civilians were routinely hacked to death and children abducted from their homes to fight.

Taylor, known simply as "Pappy" to a generation of child soldiers, was flown handcuffed and surrounded by peacekeepers to the U.N.-backed Special Court in Freetown last week, after nearly three years in exile in Nigeria.

"The people of Sierra Leone have waited a long time to see this man brought to trial," chief prosecutor Desmond de Silva said.

"The victims have the right to see one of the principle perpetrators ... of violations of their human rights in this country brought to justice," he told Reuters.

Although those who lived through the war are glad Taylor is facing justice, many fear his presence could trigger instability in a fragile region, and the court's president has asked the Netherlands to hold the bulk of his trial in The Hague.

Taylor started a rebellion in Liberia to overthrow then-president Samuel Doe in 1989. The uprising turned into a 14-year on-off civil war in which 250,000 people were killed.

Taylor was elected president of Liberia in 1997 but left for exile in Nigeria in 2003 in the face of a rebellion against him and pressure from the United States and West African leaders.

His aides have said he will plead not guilty to charges accusing him of training, financing and arming rebels who carried out the initial attacks that launched Sierra Leone's diamond-fuelled 1991-2002 civil war before looting their way through villages.

"Civilians were shot, burned in their homes, hacked to death and killed while trying to escape from attacks on their homes or from their captors," the prosecution's case summary says.

"Many civilians saw these crimes committed; others returned to their homes or places of refuge to find the results of these crimes -- dead bodies, savaged or mutilated victims and looted and burned property."

So many child soldiers took part that special units were formed for them, one of them known as the Small Boys Unit (SBU).

Some civilian victims had the initials of the Taylor-backed Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels carved on their bodies.

BBC

2 April 2006

Taylor defence to fight charges

Lawyers acting for former Liberian President Charles Taylor say they are to ask for war crimes charges against him to be dismissed.

They argue that the UN-backed court in Sierra Leone, has no right try him, and that it has no jurisdiction over Liberia or its former president.

Mr Taylor, 58, who was arrested last week, is due to appear in court in Freetown for the first time on Monday.

He faces 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

He was transferred to Sierra Leone after being arrested in Nigeria.

Nigeria had given him asylum under an agreement to end Liberia's civil war in 2003.

Defence team

When Mr Taylor appears at the Special Court on Monday, he will be represented in the first instance by a court-appointed lawyer and not a representative from his defence team.

"Taylor has not made a decision regarding his legal representation. He has asked for a little bit of time in order to consult," the court's assistant public affairs officer Peter Anderson told AFP news agency.

Liberian lawyer Francis Garlawulo said he and a number of other lawyers were preparing to act for Mr Taylor.

Another lawyer, Richard Flomo, was also expecting to go to Freetown. He called on "goodwilled people" to help fund Mr Taylor's defence.

"Mr Taylor is broke. He does not have money to plead a case," Mr Flomo told Reuters news agency. "We hope goodwilled people and other institutions will come and help so that we can plead his case...Right now there is no money."

Mr Taylor is accused of selling diamonds and buying weapons for Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front rebels, who were notorious for their brutal attacks on civilians.

The UN Security Council is currently considering a resolution to move Mr Taylor's trial to The Hague in the Netherlands because of regional security fears.

Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/africa/4870650.stm>

BBC

1 April 2006

UN to discuss Taylor trial move

UN Security Council members have been given a copy of a draft resolution to allow Liberian ex-President Charles Taylor's trial to move to The Hague.

Mr Taylor, a former warlord, has been charged with war crimes by the special court for Sierra Leone and is currently in custody in the capital, Freetown.

The UK says he threatens regional peace, backing a move to The Hague.

Meanwhile, Mr Taylor's son Charles Taylor Jr has been arrested in Miami accused of immigration offences.

Mr Taylor Jr, who is a US citizen who has been living in the Caribbean, served as the head of his father's presidential guard, known as the Anti-Terrorist Unit.

The United Nations Security Council ordered his assets to be frozen two years ago.

His father was arrested in Nigeria earlier this week.

The former Liberian president, who faces charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, is due to make his first appearance before the special court for Sierra Leone on Monday.

Legal basis

But his actual trial will take place on another continent. Shortly after Mr Taylor was captured, the special court asked for his trial to be moved to The Hague because of security concerns.

The government of the Netherlands agreed on condition the Security Council passed a resolution providing the legal basis for such a move.

The draft resolution drawn up by the United Kingdom calls on the government of the Netherlands to allow Mr Taylor's detention and trial to take place in The Hague and to allow witnesses to appear there.

It asks for all states to cooperate and for the secretary-general to assist in the arrangements for the trial, which will still be carried out by the special court.

Charles Taylor had been given asylum in Nigeria under an agreement to end Liberia's civil war, but disappeared from his home on Monday night and was later captured.

He is charged with backing rebels in neighbouring Sierra Leone who were notorious for their brutal attacks on civilians. The Security Council is expected to pass the resolution early next week.



Mr Taylor was captured as he tried to flee Nigeria

Reuters

31 March 2006

UN resolution readied on Taylor transfer to Hague

By Evelyn Leopold

UNITED NATIONS, March 31 (Reuters) - Britain circulated a U.N. Security Council resolution on Friday that authorizes the transfer of former Liberian President Charles Taylor to the Netherlands following his arrest on war crimes charges.

The resolution is in line with a request from the U.N.-backed Special Court in Sierra Leone, where Taylor has been indicted on 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the country's 1991-2002 civil war.

The draft resolution is expected to be adopted early next week, but only after practical arrangements, such as security for Taylor in the Netherlands, have been completed, British envoys said.

The document requests U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan "to assist as a matter of priority" in making legal and practical arrangements for Taylor's transfer to the Netherlands.

It said that Taylor's presence in West Africa is "an impediment to stability and a threat to the peace of Liberia and of Sierra Leone and to international peace and security in the region."

Separately, the Security Council on Friday unanimously extended the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Liberia through Sept. 30 and agreed to decide by the end of April whether to reinforce its peacekeeping mission in Ivory Coast, as U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has asked.

Taylor was captured on Tuesday near the border with Cameroon as he tried to flee Nigeria, where he had been living in exile. He was flown in handcuffs to Sierra Leone on Wednesday.

Fearing his supporters could provoke unrest in Sierra Leone and neighboring Liberia, the Sierra Leone special court asked the Netherlands to host the trial at the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

Britain, the United States and other nations had supported the transfer, diplomats said.

Taylor was indicted by the special court in 2003, when he was president of Liberia, on charges that he fueled a decade-old war by giving Sierra Leone rebels arms in exchange for diamonds. Some 50,000 people died and the rebels were infamous for hacking off arms and legs of men, women and children.

The resolution says the Netherlands should "allow the detention and trial" of Taylor on its territory by the special court for Sierra Leone.

It says that the Netherlands would have no jurisdiction over Taylor except with the consent of the Sierra Leone court.

Nigeria had granted asylum to Taylor under a 2003 agreement that helped end Liberia's civil war and insisted he could only be repatriated to Liberia.

The country's new president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, asked for Taylor to be turned over this month but made clear she did not want him to return home.

National Public Radio

1 April 2006

Prosecutor Preps Taylor Case Amid Venue Doubts

Ofeibea Quist-Arcton, NPR

All Things Considered, April 1, 2006 · Charles Taylor's chief prosecutor will make his case against the man he describes as "a regional warlord at the epicenter of the whole region." That region is West Africa. And Desmond de Silva has misgivings about the wisdom of putting Taylor, the former Liberian president, on trial in neighboring Sierra Leone.

Taylor is being carefully guarded, awaiting a Monday court appearance at a U.N.-backed special tribunal in Freetown to face 11 counts of war crimes. But officials want the trial be moved to Europe -- though still under the auspices of the special court -- to avoid stirring unrest in Liberia that could spill across the border.

The Dutch government says a resolution by the U.N. Security Council would provide a solid legal basis for changing the venue of the trial to The Hague. Britain has already begun circulating a draft resolution.

Desmond de Silva lends John Ydstie his insights about the direction the trial will take.

New York Times

1 April 2006

Britain Backs Request to Move Liberian's Trial to The Hague

By WARREN HOGE

UNITED NATIONS, March 31 — Britain circulated a draft resolution to Security Council members on Friday that would transfer the war crimes trial of Charles G. Taylor, the former Liberian president, to the Netherlands because of what it said was a threat to regional peace posed by his continued presence in West Africa.

Under its terms, Mr. Taylor would be tried in the International Criminal Court complex in The Hague under the auspices of the United Nations-backed court that was established in Sierra Leone to try people suspected of responsibility for atrocities during the country's civil war, from 1991 to 2002.

Mr. Taylor was indicted by that court in March 2003, while still president of Liberia, on 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. He had been living in exile in Nigeria from August 2003 until Wednesday, when he was arrested while trying to flee to Cameroon and flown to Sierra Leone.

Mr. Taylor is accused of backing rebels who, in a civil war that killed 50,000 people, gained grisly notoriety for raping victims and maiming and killing people by chopping off their arms, legs, hands, ears and lips.

The draft resolution said Mr. Taylor's presence in West Africa constituted "an impediment to stability and a threat to the peace of Liberia and of Sierra Leone, and to international peace and security in the region."

The plan to move the proceedings to The Hague came at the request of the Sierra Leone court.

Mr. Taylor, 58, a warlord turned president, has many loyalists in the region and was able to maintain contact with them while in Nigeria.

His arrest and detention in Sierra Leone were put into motion two weeks ago when Liberia's new president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, formally asked President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria to extradite him.

The resolution asks the Netherlands to allow unrestricted access to the court for witnesses and others required for the trial. It also would exempt Mr. Taylor from the travel ban that currently blocks his passage to Europe.

Asked about the transfer plan, Secretary General Kofi Annan told reporters, "I think everybody agrees it to be wiser to do that."

At the State Department, Adam Ereli, the deputy spokesman, said the United States backed the action as "frankly, in the interests of the court and the defendants and those connected with the trial." He said, "It is a move that reinforces, I think, justice, transparency and fairness."

A statement from the tribunal in Sierra Leone on Friday said Mr. Taylor would make his first public appearance in court there on Monday.

On Thursday, lawyers from the court's defense office met with Mr. Taylor and said he had been cooperative as they explained his rights to him and "addressed personal matters as well as detention-related issues," according to the statement. It also said, "Mr. Taylor is in fairly good health and is in good spirits."

British officials said they expected the resolution to be formally considered early next week.

Associated Press

3 April 2006

Nigerians told Taylor to flee, adviser says

By MICHELLE FAUL

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone — Nigerian security forces encouraged former Liberian President Charles Taylor to flee, his spiritual adviser said Sunday, calling into question Nigeria's repeated denials that it was complicit in Taylor's attempt to evade a war-crimes trial.

Taylor, the first former African president to be charged with crimes against humanity, is to appear today before a tribunal that is bent on sending a powerful message to despots that no one is above the law.

He has repeatedly declared his innocence and will be asked to enter a plea to 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including sexual slavery and mutilation.

Many were suspicious when Nigeria's government announced Taylor's disappearance last week, just days after Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo reluctantly agreed to hand him over from the exile haven he had been offered under an internationally brokered peace agreement ending Liberia's 14-year civil war.

Taylor's spiritual adviser, the Indian evangelist Kilari Anand Paul, said Taylor told him in a phone call from jail Saturday that State Security Service agents came with two vehicles to his Calabar villa the night of March 28.

Taylor said "they escorted him to the north, way off toward Cameroon and, in the middle of nowhere, told him to go. He said, 'Where are you guys going?' And they said they received instructions to leave him and they left," according to Paul, who spoke from his home in Houston.

Nigeria again denied the allegation.

"The story is a far-fetched figment of his jaundiced imagination," a spokesman for the Nigerian leader, Femi Fani-Kayode, said. "He must have been reading too many James Bond novels."

Associated Press

31 March 2006

Prosecutor: Escape-savvy Taylor secure

MICHELLE FAUL

Associated Press

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone - Charles Taylor once broke out of a prison in Massachusetts and nearly slipped away this week before Nigeria could hand over the former Liberian president to an international court.

Now, Taylor is being carefully guarded to make sure he doesn't escape again, his chief prosecutor told The Associated Press on Friday.

Prosecutor Desmond de Silva also said security concerns had prompted officials to request that Taylor's trial be moved to Europe, where it would remain under the auspices of the Special Court established in Sierra Leone to try those believed to bear the greatest responsibility for atrocities committed during this country's 1991-2002 civil war.

Taylor is accused of backing Sierra Leonean rebels notorious for raping and maiming civilians by chopping off their arms, legs, ears and lips. He is charged with 11 counts of crimes against humanity.

Taylor's 1989 insurgency in Liberia, which eventually killed 200,000, helped tilt West Africa into crisis.

"Charles Taylor has been a regional warlord at the epicenter of the destabilization of the whole region," de Silva said, noting that new Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf had expressed concern in a speech about her predecessor's supporters using the trial as a pretext to launch an uprising.

"If the security and peace of Liberia is imperiled, it could well spill over into Sierra Leone, and thereupon all trials would come to an end," de Silva said.

De Silva, who once called Taylor an "escapologist," said the court complex where he has been held since his arrest Wednesday was guarded by Mongolian troops. He called in an extra contingent of Irish troops and could call in more.

"I take the view that at this moment in time, the detention facility in the court is secure, and I think Mr. Taylor would find it extremely difficult to escape," de Silva said.

De Silva also said it would be difficult for anyone who might want to harm Taylor to get to him. De Silva dismissed concern expressed by Taylor's relatives about his safety in custody, noting, "We don't go around killing people."

While Special Court officials have requested the trial be moved to The Hague, his first appearance before judges was to be in Sierra Leone's capital Monday. De Silva said Taylor would be read the charges against him - 11 counts of crimes against humanity and war crimes - and be asked to plead.

"If he pleads guilty, trial will be fairly short," de Silva said. "If he pleads not guilty," it could take months.

Officials were working out the logistics of moving the trial to The Hague.

The Dutch government has said a resolution by the U.N. Security Council would give a solid legal basis for changing the venue. Britain circulated a draft resolution, drawn up in consultation with Dutch diplomats, later Friday.

Dutch Foreign Ministry spokesman Dirk-Jan Vermeij said officials also were discussing where Taylor would be held during the trial and if he is convicted.

Taylor was accused in 1983 of embezzling nearly \$1 million and fled to the United States, where he was detained on a Liberian arrest warrant. He escaped from a Massachusetts jail in 1985 - cutting through bars with a hacksaw - to launch Liberia's civil war.

Taylor fled to exile in Nigeria in 2003 as part of a deal to end fighting in Liberia. Nigeria, under pressure from the United States and others, said last week it would hand Taylor over to the U.N. court but made no move to arrest him, and he fled.

Nigerian police captured him trying to slip across the northern border into Cameroon. He reportedly had two 110-pound sacks filled with dollars and euros.

While the Sierra Leone tribunal's charges refer only to the war there, Taylor also has been accused of backing rebel fighters elsewhere in West Africa and of harboring al-Qaida suicide bombers who attacked the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, killing more than 200 people.

His son, Charles McArthur Emmanuel, was arrested Thursday by U.S. authorities in Miami. According to an affidavit filed in federal court in Miami, Emmanuel, a U.S. citizen, led Liberian forces who were responsible for Taylor's security until he went into exile in 2003. Emmanuel, 29, also known as Charles "Chuckie" Taylor Jr., was on a United Nations list of Liberians whose travel was restricted.

Emmanuel appeared in federal court Friday on a charge of passport fraud, said Barbara Gonzalez, a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement spokeswoman.

Associated Press Writer Anthony Deutsch contributed to this report from The Hague, Netherlands.

Associated Press

3 April 2006

Taylor says Nigeria betrayed him

Former Liberian president to face war crimes charges

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone (AP) -- Charles Taylor's spiritual adviser said the Liberian warlord facing trial for crimes against humanity told him in a phone call from jail that Nigerian security forces had encouraged him to flee his home-in-exile last week, and that he felt betrayed by Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo.

"They said 'You get on and go,' and they left him behind," Indian evangelist Kilari Anand Paul told The Associated Press in a telephone interview late Sunday.

Nigeria vehemently denied the allegation.

"[Taylor] should stop telling tales. The story is a far-fetched figment of his jaundiced imagination," a spokesman for the Nigerian leader, Femi Fani-Kayode, told The Associated Press. "He must have been reading too many James Bond novels."

Many were suspicious when Nigeria's government announced Taylor's "disappearance" a week ago, just days after Obasanjo reluctantly agreed to hand him over from the exile haven he had been offered under an internationally brokered peace agreement ending Liberia's 14-year civil war.

For two days, Nigeria had resisted calls from the United States, human rights organizations and others to arrest Taylor to ensure that he would stand trial.

He was arrested Wednesday and taken to the war tribunal in Sierra Leone, where he is to be officially charged Monday afternoon.

Some questioned the timing of Taylor's capture -- a day after Obasanjo had left for a trip to Washington, where the White House suggested he would not be meeting with President Bush unless he could answer questions about Taylor's disappearance.

Diplomats and Nigerian officials who spoke on condition of anonymity suggested Taylor had been allowed to flee. Some speculated he might have been taken by rogue elements in the State Security Service set on embarrassing the president.

At the time, Nigerian authorities said they had arrested the police officers deployed to guard Taylor at his villa in the southern coastal town of Calabar. But a panel of inquiry ordered to investigate the circumstances of his disappearance was disbanded the day he was captured.

Paul said Taylor told him in the phone call from jail Saturday, however, that it was State Security Service agents, and not the normal police guards, who had come with two vehicles to his Calabar villa the night of March 28. Taylor and five or six people in his entourage were ordered into the lead vehicle, and the security agents followed in the second, Paul quoted Taylor as saying.

Taylor said "they escorted him to the north, way off toward Cameroon and, in the middle of nowhere, told him to go. He said 'Where are you guys going?' And they said they received

instructions to leave him and they left," according to Paul, who spoke from his home in Houston, Texas.

Taylor had traveled more than 600 miles (966 kilometers) along Nigerian roads that have numerous checkpoints manned by police, army and customs officials, before reaching the border with Cameroon hours later.

Before he crossed over, Paul said: "the same agents turned up and arrested him ... they had guns and told him to surrender himself."

Paul said Taylor told him he believed his captors thought he would flee, and that the agents had been ordered to kill him, "but they couldn't because he surrendered without any resistance, and because he had five or six people with him."

Later Sunday, Paul included an AP reporter in a telephone conference call with Taylor, who spoke from the heavily guarded detention center of the war tribunal in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

The reporter heard Taylor ask Paul to "bring two attorneys. Bring them any way you can. I need somebody to take charge of this defense immediately ... (I need) to put things into motion because we have only 30 days to answer the indictment."

Taylor has been indicted by the U.N.-backed tribunal in Sierra Leone on 11 counts pertaining to Sierra Leone's 11-year civil war, which he is accused of fomenting to plunder its rich diamond fields.

Associated Press (Aljazeera)

2 April 2006

Taylor seeks defence lawyers

by

Taylor was arrested as he attempted to flee Nigeria

Charles Taylor, the former Liberian president, has asked his spiritual adviser to contact lawyers in the United States and Britain about his defence against charges at an international war crimes tribunal in Sierra Leone.

In a telephone conversation with Kilari Anand Paul, an Indian evangelist, Taylor said "bring two attorneys. Bring them any way you can. I need somebody to take charge of this defence immediately ... (I need) to put things into motion because we have only 30 days to answer the indictment".

Paul had included an Associated Press reporter in the conference call late on Sunday with Taylor, who spoke from a prison cell at the tribunal. But the reporter was not allowed to ask questions for fear prison authorities would disconnect the call.

Paul later told The AP that Taylor had asked him to contact a top law professor at Harvard University, in Boston, and a senior Queen's Council lawyer in Britain.

Taylor is to go to court on Monday, where he will be read 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including sexual slavery and mutilation, for his alleged part in fostering Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war.

Security is tight at the Special Court in Sierra Leone, the country to which Taylor is accused of exporting his own civil war. Court officials who have received death threats and the first former African president to be charged with crimes against humanity will be protected by bulletproof glass and dozens of UN peacekeepers from Mongolia and Ireland.

Taylor is to be judged by a UN-backed tribunal established to try those seen as bearing greatest responsibility for atrocities during Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war.

Telegraph

1 April 2006

How Taylor's band of thugs threatened to have me killed

By **Tim Butcher**

(Filed: 01/04/2006)

I have to admit to feeling personal satisfaction at the [arrest this week on war crimes charges of Charles Taylor](#), the Liberian rebel leader-turned-despot.

Taylor's people threatened my life during my time as The Daily Telegraph's Africa correspondent. A death threat is a routine enough occurrence for a journalist in Africa, but there was something truly sinister about the menace from Taylor's regime.

It came in the summer of 2003 when his grip on power in Liberia was approaching breaking point. Rebels were at the walls of his capital, or in the case of Monrovia, the main bridge that controls the entrance to the city.

Mortars rained down, killing scores and terrifying the rest of the civilian population. It was a bloody and chaotic time to be in Liberia.

For 13 years Taylor had run the tiny West African nation as his own gangster's fiefdom, brutally seizing power in the aftermath of the torture and murder of the previous president, Samuel Doe.



Charles Taylor is surrounded by UN peacekeepers in Freetown

President Doe made the mistake of trusting that he would be safe in the hands of some Nigerian peacekeepers deployed at the run-down port of Monrovia.

He was wrong. He was grabbed by armed rebels, stripped to his underpants and tortured.

One of his ears was cut-off and he eventually bled to death but perhaps the most horrific aspect of the killing was that it was proudly filmed by his torturers.

When I visited Liberia, copies of the video were available at all good video stores.

Taylor had not been directly involved in President Doe's killing but he swept to power in the resulting vacuum and proceeded to run the country and its people into the ground.

The thing that struck me most powerfully during my visit was the role of ritual murder and magic in Liberia.

Almost all Liberians believed in the power of black magic and for Taylor, black magic was an important part of his rule.

He styled himself Dakpannah Taylor, an honorific meaning chief magician or Zoe, a member of Liberia's black magic society known as Poro. And in a clear message to his people, state television showed him using his right hand to shake hands with cabinet members but his left hand for greeting other Zoes.

To its defenders Poro is an innocent social group that teaches young men to discover and extend themselves, a sort of Scout movement.

To its critics, those people who find the bodies of children in the Liberian bush mutilated by Poro members for black magic ritual, there is nothing innocent about it at all.

A story I wrote connecting Taylor with Poro was behind my death threat.

I had left Liberia and was back home in South Africa where a British diplomat phoned through the "credible and current" warning.

I was slightly flattered. At the time, his rule was crumbling and he had bigger issues to deal with, like arranging the murder of Sam "Mosquito" Bockarie, a Sierra Leonean dancing champion-turned-rebel whom Taylor wanted silenced so he could not testify against him in any future war crimes trial.

But when Taylor was allowed to leave Liberia to live the life of a retired dictator in southern Nigeria, the death threat still played on my mind.

No matter that the chief United Nations diplomat in Liberia used very undiplomatic language to call Taylor a "psychopathic killer". I still felt a need for the matter to be laid to rest.

That finally came with the news that Taylor is being confined to a sweaty, concrete cell with a blue tin roof on a hillside in Sierra Leone where he will be held to account for his role in fomenting its ghastly civil war.

Reuters

1 April 2006

Taylor is not war criminal, needs cash, lawyer says

By Alphonso Toweh MONROVIA, April 1 (Reuters) - Former Liberian president Charles Taylor will plead not guilty to war crimes charges this week but the ex-warlord needs donations from "goodwilled people" to pay for his defence, his lawyer said on Saturday.

Taylor, whose name became synonymous with a decade of brutal conflict in West Africa, is behind bars at a U.N.-backed court in Sierra Leone facing 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity during that country's 1991-2002 civil war.

The charismatic 58-year-old Taylor is widely believed to have amassed a multi-million dollar fortune by exerting a tight control over Liberia's gold, iron ore and rubber. His rambling Monrovia mansion remains boarded up.

Africa's most notorious war-crimes suspect is due to make his first court appearance on Monday, when he will be asked to plead guilty or not guilty.

The court in Freetown has asked the Netherlands to host his trial in The Hague, citing fears that keeping him in Sierra Leone could provoke unrest there and in neighbouring Liberia.

"Mr Taylor will not plead guilty because the facts are there," Richard Flomo, one of the lawyers representing him, said. "Even if they take the case to The Hague and they are transparent, Mr Taylor will be acquitted."

Taylor is accused by the special court of smuggling arms to Sierra Leone's RUF rebels -- notorious for hacking the limbs off women and children -- in return for "blood diamonds".

He was arrested last week in Nigeria after slipping away from a luxury villa where he was in exile. He was captured in a four-by-four vehicle with a trunk full of dollars heading for the Cameroon border.

"Mr Taylor is broke. He does not have money to plead a case," Flomo told Reuters. "We hope goodwilled people and other institutions will come and help so that we can plead his case."

"Right now there is no money," he added.

Taylor rose to power with a 1989 rebellion in Liberia to overthrow ex-president Samuel Doe. The uprising turned into a 14-year on-off civil war in which 250,000 people were killed before Taylor -- elected president in 1997 -- left for exile in 2003.

Flomo said he was awaiting clearance from the United Nations to travel to Freetown to join his client. "Our security has to be guaranteed because the environment is hostile," the lawyer said.

Known simply as "Pappy" to a generation of drug-crazed, Kalashnikov-wielding child soldiers, Taylor is deeply religious man, who led prayer meetings dressed all in white. Prostrating himself for divine help, he once declared: "I am not the president, Jesus is the president."

Meanwhile, a son of the former Liberian president has been charged with passport fraud and is in U.S. custody, a spokeswoman for the U.S. immigration service said.

Charles McArthur Emmanuel, also known as Charles "Chuckie" Taylor Jr., was arrested at Miami International Airport on Thursday night after flying in from Trinidad, and was accused of lying about his father's identity in a U.S. passport application.

Liberian Times

1 April 2006

Liberia: Taylor's Interest, Relatives, Friends, and Lawyers Depart For Freetown

by J. Cholo Brooks / Senior Staff Writer

Barely two days behind bars in Sierra Leone for war Crimes charges, former Liberian leaders, Charles Taylor is expected to receive some relatives, friends and a team of Liberia lawyers to cater to his well-being and represent his interest while the trial is on.

One of his youngest sisters, Geebia Taylor and two of Taylor's loyalists, Sandoe Johnson and another person named not disclosed departed Monrovia this morning for Freetown.

Their mission, according to Sandoe Johnson, former lawmaker of Bomi County during the administration of Mr. Taylor, said it was necessary to move quickly to aidea, and also cater to him while he is in detention, "his interest must be protected as former President, we should not abandon him during this period", Johnson told our Correspondent.

Also making their way to Freetown is a three-man team of Liberian lawyers who have expressed their interest to represent the detained former Liberian leader interest during his trail at the UN backed war crimes court in Sierra Leone.

The legal team is headed by former Justice Minister, Cllr. Francis Garlawolo, the two others are former Associate Justice Watkins Wright and Cllr. Joseph Flomo, speaking to our Correspondent Cllr. Garlawolo said they were praying that their legal representation will help to speed up the trail and give Mr. Taylor a free and fair trail.

Meanwhile, Jewel Howard Taylor former wife of Mr. Taylor, now Senator for Bong County said she was making effort to visit her ex-husband in the Sierra Leonean capital, Freetown. Speaking to reporters in Monrovia Senator Taylor said despite the disconnection of their marital status, she was concern about the well-being of her ex-husband.

"He just called me this morning, and said he is doing fairly well in prison, I will visit him to see any time." Senator Taylor told reporters in Monrovia. It is however known as to whether the UN backed war crimes court will permit the representation of his lawyers during the trail.

In a related development, some Liberians in Monrovia told our Correspondent that the trail of Mr. Taylor be transfer to the Netherlands, because according to them "the trail of Mr. Taylor in Freetown will not be free and fair. Our fear is retaliation from the people of that country", Amara Kollie said.

About the Author:

J. Cholo Brooks is a Liberian journalist. As a former correspondent for the BBC African Service and currently the manager of local news agency the Global News Network, Brooks brings an intelligent and compassionate view to the latest in Liberian news. Brooks writes exclusively for TheLiberianTimes.com, for which he serves as Senior Staff Writer.

AFP

2 April 2006

'No impunity' message to war crime suspects

By Gerard Aziakou

'You can run but you can't hide. It's a message that is important to people who are in a position to make decisions on how they conduct warfare and what methods and means they utilise'

THE arrest of Liberia's former president and warlord Charles Taylor sends a powerful message to other war crimes indictees that "you can run but you can't hide" and there will be no impunity, UN and human rights officials say.

As Taylor, the single most powerful figure behind a series of civil wars in Liberia and neighbouring Sierra Leone between 1989 and 2003, awaits trial before a UN-backed special court, rights advocates voiced hope that top Balkan war crimes fugitives Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic would be next to face justice.

Commenting on Taylor's arrest in Nigeria this week, UN chief Kofi Annan said: "I think it's a warning to all would-be warlords that they will be held to account and that impunity will not be allowed to stand. Those days are gone and they should really think before they engage in any such adventure."

Sierra Leone's special war crimes court has charged Taylor, 58, with 11 counts of crimes against humanity, murder, sexual violence and unlawful use of child soldiers.

"The arrest of Taylor is extremely significant not only for west Africa but for international justice in general," Shaoli Sarkar, programme director at the Washington-based Coalition for International Justice.

"Charles Taylor's arrest and surrender for trial signals an end to the impunity associated with mass crimes," Richard Dicker, head of New York-based Human Rights Watch's International Justice Programme, told AFP. "The message here for Karadzic, Mladic, and other indictees is clear. Their days on the run are numbered," he added.

Earlier this month, former Yugoslav strongman Slobodan Milosevic died of a heart attack while on trial at a UN court in The Hague on more than 60 charges, including genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity for his role in stoking the Balkans conflicts.

His death brought renewed urgency to efforts to nab Mladic and Karadzic. Karadzic and Mladic were indicted by the UN court at The Hague for war crimes and genocide in 1995 for their role in the Bosnian war, notably the massacre of more than 7,000 Muslims in the eastern town of Srebrenica.

Karadzic is believed to be hiding in Bosnia or Montenegro, where he is still seen as a hero by ethnic Serbs who helped him escape search operations by NATO-led peacekeepers. Serbia said Friday it was still hopeful that Mladic would be handed over to the UN war crimes tribunal before a European Union deadline for his capture runs out in a few days.

Niccolo Figa-Talamanca, programme director of the Brussels-based No Peace Without Justice, for his part underscored the deterrent effect of targeting those responsible for ordering war crimes. “The message is very clear: You can run but you can’t hide. It’s a message that is important to people who are in a position to make decisions on how they conduct warfare and what methods and means they utilize,” he told AFP. “It’s those who bear the greatest responsibility for the crimes, the decision-makers who must be brought to justice.”

Figa-Talamanca however slammed efforts by Sierra Leone’s UN-backed war crimes court to push for a transfer of Taylor’s trial to The Hague over fears it could trigger renewed unrest in west Africa.

Taylor is believed to still enjoy considerable support in the region, and the Sierra Leone tribunal told Dutch authorities that Taylor’s “physical presence there could endanger the stability of the region”.

Figa-Talamanca, a prominent international justice lawyer, however dismissed the security reason given for the transfer as “absolutely bogus”. “The impression we are getting is that the transfer to The Hague is more a question of special treatment deserving of the rank of former president Taylor and that is absolutely unacceptable,” he said.

“It seems to be part of a deal involving Nigeria and it sends exactly the wrong message to the people of Sierra Leone and in general the people of west Africa ...when the contributions of the Special Court to peace and security in the region has been to send a single powerful message that nobody is above the law,” he noted. “Taylor was the guy making decisions. That’s why it’s so important he be tried like everybody else by the Special Court in front of the people of Sierra Leone in Freetown,” Figa-Talamanca added. *afp*

Sunday Herald (UK)

2 April 2006

Leaders finally face justice over war crimes

From Fred Bridgland in Johannesburg

THE sensational attempt by Liberia's Charles Taylor to flee Nigeria carrying large bags of dollars and euros last week was followed by his arrest and an arraignment that will make him the first former African head of state to face international justice on charges of war crimes.

Taylor was whisked in handcuffs with extraordinary speed from the Cameroon border, which he was attempting to cross, to Liberia's capital, Monrovia, and then to Freetown, the capital of neighbouring Sierra Leone.

Inside the Freetown compound of the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, away from reporters, Taylor was read an 11-count indictment on his role in alleged war crimes in the course of the decade-long civil war in the diamond-rich West African state. The charges include forced recruitment of child soldiers, murder, rape, mutilation and sexual enslavement of civilians.

It was a truly historic moment because until now, in the turbulent, violent arena of African politics, leaders who brutalise their civilian subjects have faced few consequences.

But dramatic though Taylor's arrest was, a far greater chill will have run down the spines of the likes of Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe, Sudan President Omar al Bashir, former Chad dictator Hissen Habre and former Ethiopian military dictator Haile Mariam "Red Terror" Mengistu, after the appearance in court in The Hague of Congolese warlord Thomas Lubanga Dyilo.

Lubanga made history as the first suspect to be arrested and charged before the new International Criminal Court (ICC), which began its investigations into atrocities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) during 2004.

Among the initial charges made against Lubanga by the ICC's Argentinian chief prosecutor, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, is "of enlisting and conscripting children under the age of 15 and using them to participate actively in hostilities". Moreno-Ocampo said Lubanga had trained children as young as seven to become guerrilla soldiers.

Lubanga's arraignment is of infinitely more long-term importance than that of Charles Taylor's because the ICC, launched in July 2002 with a staff of hundreds in the Dutch capital, is the world's first permanent international war crimes court. Despite a boycott of the court by the United States, 100 countries, including Britain, have ratified the 1998 Statute of Rome that brought it into being.

Lubanga's arraignment will open the floodgates and more and more human rights abusers and those accused of war crimes and genocide will be brought before it.

The Sierra Leone court – like the post-war Nuremberg Tribunal and the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia – is, by comparison, a once-only, temporary institution.

Gaining evidence to support the prosecution of 45-year-old Lubanga, and others from the DRC who will appear before the court following further planned arrests, has involved more than 60 ICC prosecution missions to the remote northeastern Ituri region of the DRC over the past two years. Moreno-Ocampo said his investigators had worked almost surreptitiously in Ituri because guerrillas from the rival Lendu and Hema ethnic groups "could kill our witnesses".

Lubanga is now being held at the ICC's prison in Scheveningen, on the North Sea coast on the outskirts of The Hague, where the court has leased 12 cells, with the option to take more as the UN's Yugoslav Tribunal, the current main tenant of the prison, winds down its operation.

The UN says more than 60,000 people have been killed in Ituri and more than half a million of the province's 4.5 million people have become internal refugees since late 1998 when war erupted in the eastern DRC, stirred by the neighbouring states of Rwanda and Uganda and the DRC government.

The people of Ituri are subject to extreme harassment from all sides, facing killings, mutilation, rape, plunder and arson. Roads are insecure and movement can only take place with armed convoys. The results are massive and repeated displacement, poor food security and disease outbreaks. Conflict has damaged social infrastructure, such as clinics, schools and hospitals. The widespread destruction of property has left many without homes to go back to. Some internal refugees are so desperate that they even lack clothing. Many families have been forced to move several times, each successive displacement increasing their vulnerability.

The struggle between the Hema and the Lendu and the Congolese, and the Ugandan and Rwandan governments is for the region's land, gold, diamonds, timber, suspected rich oil reserves and coltan, the essential mineral in high-tech components of cellphones.

The war-within-a-war for control of Ituri, and the cycle of attacks and counter-attacks by ethnic armies, comes against the background of an only recently ended full-scale war in the DRC – often described as the “first African world war”. The conflict involved nine African states, 20 different armed factions and is estimated to have cost some four million lives.

The ground-breaking first court session of the ICC in its brand-new courtroom, before Judge Claude Jorda of France, lasted less than 30 minutes at the end of February and was held purely to establish the identity of the accused and to inform him of his rights.

The first charge to be laid against Lubanga when he reappears in court in June will be for the murder by his forces of nine Bangladeshi peacekeeper soldiers of the UN Mission in the Congo (MONUC). He is also certain to be charged with the massacre of more than 800 civilians in the Ituri mining town of Mongbwalu by his forces of the Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC).

The international media organisation Reporters Without Borders has also asked the ICC to investigate Lubanga's role in the disappearance of Agence France Press's local correspondent Acquitté Kisembo. Kisembo went missing immediately after reporting on the UN-backed evacuation of Lubanga's militia from Bunia, the main town in Ituri, during June 2003.

In common with other Congolese warlords, Lubanga had tried to clean up his image in a bid to enter formal politics. At the ICC hearing he stated his occupation as “professional politician”. During 2003, he moved to the DRC capital, Kinshasa, with the aim of converting his UPC into a political party in order to contest the vast country's first democratic elections, originally scheduled to occur last year but delayed because of huge political, security and logistics problems. But prior to this, in 2002, he formed the UPC's military wing, the Forces Patriotiques Pour La Libération Du Congo, FPLC.

Richard Dicker of Human Rights Watch – which is, along with Amnesty International, one of the world's two biggest independent human rights pressure groups – said: “Chief Prosecutor Moreno-Ocampo should also investigate those who armed and supported militia groups operating in Ituri, including key players in power in Kinshasa, Kampala [Uganda's capital] and Kigali [Rwanda's capital].”

At home, the DRC government has been criticised for its support of specific militias and for biased military courts and, more recently, for failing to suppress ethnic undertones in the run-up to elections, now planned for June. The new date, however, is a clear non-starter. Kinshasa has also come under fire for commissioning alleged human rights abusers as army generals.

The fledgling court, which has 18 permanent blue and brown-robed judges currently heavily under employed in The Hague, has also issued arrest warrants for Joseph Kony, leader of the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda, which has abducted thousands of children and turned them into soldiers and sex slaves.

Warrants are also out for Kony's deputy, Vincent Otti, and the LRA commanders Raska Lukwiya, Okot Odiambo and Dominic Ongwen. The arrest warrants for Kony and his men were historic because they were first to be processed, on October 6 last year, by the ICC.

The situation in Darfur, the western region of Sudan, was also referred to the ICC by the UN Security Council in March 2005. A massive investigation is under way there by teams of ICC legal staff. As yet, no arrest warrants have been issued. But, interestingly, the US placed no obstacles in the way of the ICC investigation despite President George Bush's refusal to ratify the ICC charter for fear that one day American politicians and generals may find themselves hauled before the court.

The situation in the Central African Republic has also been referred to the court, but as yet Chief Prosecutor Moreno-Ocampo has yet to decide to open an investigation.

The only cases so far on the court's agenda are from Africa, but inevitably its investigations will spread worldwide.

The ICC is composed of the court itself, divided into a number of chambers (Pre-Trial, Trial and Appellate), the Registry, the Office of the Prosecutor and the Assembly of State Parties.

The initial impetus for its establishment came from within the United Nations. Although it is legally a separate entity established by a separate treaty between states, and not the Security Council acting under the UN Charter, the UN has a clearly defined role towards the court.

The court's relationship with the UN is governed by a relationship agreement which mainly provides for Security Council referrals under the Rome Statute and for UN assistance in payment for any prosecutions made under such a referral. Countries ratifying the treaty that created the ICC, grant it authority to try their citizens for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

With Thomas Lubanga's arraignment, the idea (which has been around for more than 100 years) of an International Criminal Court has become reality. No murderous dictator or warlord will ever again sleep entirely easy at night, secure from any threat of ultimate justice.

Voice of America
31 March 2006

Ex-Liberian President May Face War Crimes Soon

By Joe Bavier
Freetown
31 March 2006

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Charles Taylor, center wearing bullet-proof vest, seen after he arrived at Freetown, Sierra Leone, March 29, 2006

Prosecutors at Sierra Leone's special war crimes court say Liberia's former warlord-turned-president, Charles Taylor, could appear before a judge very soon. Despite moves to relocate the trial to the Netherlands, Taylor will now likely have his first day in court in Sierra Leone.

The deputy prosecutor at the U.N.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, Christopher Staker, says Charles Taylor's first appearance in court could come as early as next week.

"The first time Charles Taylor will appear in court will be at what is known as the initial appearance," said Mr. Staker. "Under the rules, that has to happen as soon as practicable. Normally, that is within a matter of days. We anticipate that it may be as early as Monday or Tuesday next week."

There was confusion about where Taylor would end up even before his arrest in Nigeria earlier this week. After lifting his asylum status following a request by Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Nigeria said it would only hand him over to Liberian authorities.

But after only a brief stopover in Liberia, Taylor was sent on to Freetown, where he is currently facing 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity for backing rebels in Sierra Leone's civil war. He denies the charges.

However, despite his likely arraignment at the court in Freetown, few believe he will remain in the country for very long.

At the urging of President Sirleaf, who cited fears that Taylor's return to the region, even as a prisoner, might create instability, the court is now seeking to move his trial to The Hague.

Deputy Prosecutor Staker says that process has already begun. He says the Dutch government has already agreed to host the trial. And the special court has asked to use the facilities of the new International Criminal Court, though that body will not be involved in trying the case.

But a final decision is being left up to the U.N. Security Council, which will have a final say on the change of venue.

Staker says, what is important is not where Taylor is tried, but that it now appears he will finally face justice.

"It is an amazing feeling that is shared by the population of Sierra Leone, and certainly by everyone who works here," he added.

Taylor is accused of supporting the RUF rebel group during Sierra Leone's decade-long civil war. The group was notorious for training drug-addled child soldiers who went on to torture, rape, and, in thousands of cases, amputate the hands and feet of their civilian victims.

Independent

1 April 2006

Charles Taylor: Africa's monster

He escaped from jail by sawing through a bar in a laundry and climbing down a knotted sheet
By Paul Vallely

A novelist who dreamt up a character like Charles Taylor would be accused of resorting to the most exaggerated of stereotypes. Charles Ghankay McCarthy Boye Dakphanna Taylor, the small man with many names, was last year described as the third most wanted war crimes suspect in the world - after Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic, whose recent death has left a cell vacant for Taylor in The Hague.

Taylor, whom one African commentator yesterday described as having "a set of inward teeth like a boa constrictor", is the man human rights groups accuse of being responsible for wars and instability right across West Africa for more than a decade. Because of him tens of thousands of people died in an orgy of murder, rape and systematic mutilation in which machetes and axes were used to hack the feet or hands from adults, children and even babies. The slogan of those he sponsored was "We'll kill you if you cry".

But it is not just in the scale of his monstrosity that Charles Taylor is a larger-than-life figure. He is the man who in the 1970s, just two years out of an economics degree in the United States, managed to embezzle \$900,000 (£518,000) after landing a plum job running Liberia's General Services Agency. When he was arrested in America in the 1980s, he escaped from the jail by sawing through a bar and climbing down a knotted sheet. Later as a warlord controlling most of Liberia (apart from the capital) in the early 1990s, he turned up in full military combat gear for a West African regional conference in Burkina Faso.

Then he ran for the post of president of Liberia under the infamous electioneering banner "He killed my ma, he killed my pa, but I will vote for him". (Which the voters did, thinking that Taylor in the presidential palace would be less trouble than at the head of a rebel army in the bush.) As president he once publicly caned his daughter in her school after she was suspended for indiscipline.

He made an unholy alliance with the US televangelist Pat Robertson using the preacher's Operation Blessing planes - which were supposed to be sending relief supplies to the victims of the genocide in Rwanda - to haul diamond-mining equipment. And when he was accused by the United Nations of being a gun-runner and a diamond smuggler he addressed a mass prayer meeting (having got himself designated a Baptist lay preacher) clothed from head to foot in white - and prostrated himself on the ground to pray for forgiveness, while simultaneously denying the charges.

But if, to European eyes, there was something of the grotesque African comic about Taylor, he was no less deadly for it. His arrest, after years in protective exile in Nigeria, should bring to justice one of the worst perpetrator of crimes against humanity in a continent where the competition for that grim title has over the years been all too fierce.

Charles Taylor had a privileged upbringing as the descendant of freed American slaves for whom Liberia was created. At the age of 24 he was sent to Massachusetts to study economics. His

degrees secured him a job in the regime of President Samuel Doe, controlling a chunk of Liberia's budget. But the two men fell out and Taylor returned to the US. It was in 1984 that he was arrested under a Liberian extradition warrant and made his daring jail break.

He fled from the United States to Libya where, under Colonel Gaddafi, he underwent guerrilla training. There he met other African malcontents, including Foday Sankoh who was later to launch the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone, the group which perpetrated most of the atrocities which led to Taylor's war crimes indictment by the chief prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone in 2003. It alleged that Taylor supplied arms to the Sierra Leone rebels in exchange for diamonds. But that was to happen later. First, in 1989, Taylor launched an armed uprising against Doe's repressive government from neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire.

Within a year Doe had been ousted by Taylor and his lieutenants who included one Colonel Butt Naked (who now claims to be a born-again Christian) and Prince Yormie Johnson, who at the last moment split from Taylor and captured Monrovia for himself - torturing Doe to death - and depriving Taylor of outright victory.

The rebels then began a seven-year civil war among themselves, with seven ethnic factions fighting for control of Liberia's resources iron, diamonds, timber and rubber. At least 200,000 people were killed and more than a million forced from their homes in one of the bloodiest conflicts in Africa's bloody history. But by 1997 Taylor was sufficiently confident of victory to organise a lavish wedding to his third wife, Jewel, another economist. A few months later Taylor won a large majority in Liberia's first general election for years.

But over the next six years, for all his public showmanship, Taylor did little to improve the lives of ordinary Liberians. Unemployment and illiteracy remained above 75 per cent. Little investment was made in the country's schools, hospitals, roads and other infrastructure. Most Liberians remained without piped water and electricity. Instead Taylor focused on diamonds, and not just those to be mined in Liberia but also those from neighbouring Sierra Leone. He fomented unrest and brutal excesses in the region in return for what became known as "blood diamonds". In response, discontented Liberians took up arms against him under the rebel banner Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy.

The change came in 2003. Under pressure from other African nations, supported by the international community, the West African regional community ECOWAS inaugurated peace talks between Taylor's government, civil society groups and the rebels. Not long afterwards the chief prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone issued an indictment against President Taylor for "bearing the greatest responsibility" for the atrocities in that country. He was also alleged to have masterminded an assassination attempt against the presidents of Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire.

Ceasefires were repeatedly made and broken in the peace process. Then, while Taylor was out of Liberia to attend the peace talks in Ghana, his vice-president, the infelicitously named Moses Blah, seized power at the instigation, some say, of Washington. Upon his return, Taylor dismissed Blah, only to reinstate him a few days later. Meanwhile, the rebels besieged the capital and several bloody battles against a background of public calls from the US President George Bush for Taylor to stand down.

Eventually Taylor agreed, in return for an offer of safe exile in Nigeria. He handed power to Moses Blah in the presence of the presidents of Ghana, South Africa and Mozambique - and with 2,300 US Marines in three warships just off the coast. Taylor flew to Nigeria where the

government provided houses for him and his entourage in the seaside town of Calabar. Taylor was placed on Interpol's Most Wanted list, but he seemed safe so long as he remained quietly in Calabar.

But something changed. Whether the new Liberian government of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, 67, a former director of the United Nations Development Programme and vice-president of Citicorp, who was elected president in November last year, got word that Taylor was plotting again is unclear. Some suspect that Mrs Sirleaf just decided that Liberia would never be stable so long as Taylor was around. For even now many Liberians still support him. Many commentators suspected that if Taylor had stood in the November elections he might well have won.

Or it may well have been pressure from Washington. In 2003, the US Congress offered a \$2m reward for Taylor's capture. In 2004, the Bush administration presented a draft resolution to the United Nations Security Council seeking a freeze of Taylor's assets, as well as those of his family. Then Interpol issued a "red notice", giving countries the international right to arrest him.

Whichever, within weeks of taking office in January, Mrs Sirleaf submitted an official request to Nigeria for Taylor's extradition. Last week Nigeria agreed to release Taylor to stand trial in Sierra Leone. Days later Taylor disappeared from his seaside villa and was caught as he tried to cross the border into Cameroon with two large boxes stuffed with cash.

He is now in a UN jail in Sierra Leone but it seems likely that the trial will be transferred to The Hague. A hearing in West Africa could well reignite the region's conflicts. Taylor still has many supporters in key positions in government and the Liberian parliament. During the election his party members were on the streets shouting: "Our pappy, dat dey carry, dey go bring back" (Our leader, who they took away, will be brought back). Many Liberians regard the pictures of Taylor in handcuffs as a violation of the peace accord. Some fear that, even from his cell, Charles Taylor could mobilise a guerrilla army, capable of attacking the court in Freetown from the surrounding hills.

Nor is it the case that he is without supporters elsewhere in the region. The politics of Africa are messier, and murkier, with their ethnic suspicions and resonances of old colonial grudges, than most outsiders could ever understand. In the past, Africa's corrupt leaders knew that even if they were forced from office as result of their excesses, they could usually rely on their fellow presidents to offer them sanctuary. The arrest of Charles Taylor could signal that that may no longer be the case. Which will be another step forward in Africa's long slow trek to development and democracy.

A Life in Brief

BORN January 1948 in Arthington, near Monrovia, Liberia.

FAMILY Married three times. Current wife, Jewel, is an economist.

EDUCATION Studied economics at Bentley College, Massachusetts 1972-77.

CAREER Served in the government of President Samuel Doe but returned to the US where he was arrested for embezzlement. Escaped from prison and ended up in Libya for paramilitary training. From 1989 to 1997 headed a rebel insurgency and was a prominent warlord during Liberia's seven year civil war. In 1997 was elected president of Liberia.

Closely allied to Foday Sankoh's RUF rebels in Sierra Leone throughout the civil war there. In 2003 was indicted for war crimes.

HE SAYS "Jesus Christ was accused of being a murderer in his time." - to an interviewer who suggested Taylor was no better than a murderer.

THEY SAY "Charles Taylor is one of the single greatest causes of spreading wars in West Africa" - Peter Takirambudde, Human Rights Watch

A novelist who dreamt up a character like Charles Taylor would be accused of resorting to the most exaggerated of stereotypes. Charles Ghankay McCarthy Boye Dakphanna Taylor, the small man with many names, was last year described as the third most wanted war crimes suspect in the world - after Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic, whose recent death has left a cell vacant for Taylor in The Hague.

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Cocorioko website

2 April 2006

EDITORIAL

GOD IS A SIERRA LEONEAN

All over the nation of Sierra Leone yesterday, people breathed a sigh of relief that at last the man who spearheaded their pain and troubles is at last in the hands of international law.

The prosecution and eventual life imprisonment of Charles Taylor, if he is found guilty, will not bring back the nearly one million souls that perished in the two countries of Liberia and Sierra Leone. It will bring back the limbs of innocent children, women and men chopped off by the wicked rebels who belonged to Taylor's NPFL and Foday Sankoh's RUF. It will not bring back the relatively better economic situations that prevailed in both countries before Taylor started the whole tragic drama.

However, the arrest and transfer to the Special Court on Wednesday of Charles Taylor sent out a clear, unadulterated and stern message to those who will hear it. There shall be no more acts of impunity and wickedness to the innocent people of Sierra Leone and Africa. The days when anybody can take up a gun and attain selfish, brutal and megalomaniac power through merciless killings of innocent people and destruction of their country's basic infrastructure on which billions of dollars had been spent will no longer be permitted. And if any countries needed such a message, it is Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Liberia and Sierra Leone are two countries where impunity reached frightening levels. When you think back about the horrible deeds of Samuel Doe, Charles Taylor, Prince Johnson and other warlords in Liberia, you cannot but applaud the arrest of Charles Taylor on Wednesday. When you think back about the satanic and cruel deeds of Foday Sankoh and other warlords in Sierra Leone, you cannot but thank God that Charles Taylor was arrested on Wednesday.

Now, people will think seriously before they seek power at all costs. They will consider that there will be an enormous penalty to pay if they try to seek power through remorseless wickedness, cruelty and criminal acts. They will now realize that the innocent people, whose interests they never, ever pursued and whom they considered worthy only of being cruelly exterminated or used to gain power, now have their interests being looked after by the international community.

Indeed, Wednesday was a watershed and landmark day in Africa. The message is now clear-cut. Respect the human and civil rights of the people. Respect the lives of other human beings. Do not seek power through hellish violence, mayhem and cruelty to the people. If you do, whatever your position or backing, you are a goner. The cells of International Justice will be your abode for the remainder of your miserable life.

United Nations



Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 1 April 2006

[The media summaries and press clips do not necessarily represent the views of UNMIL.]

International Clips on Liberia

04/01/2006 08:24:32

Family members of Charles Taylor visit him in prison

Monrovia_(dpa) _ Three family members of indicted war criminal Charles Taylor are traveling to the Sierra Leonean capital, Freetown to visit Taylor in prison, according to press reports Saturday. Taylor's elder sister Gebea Taylor, his tough talking nephew, former lawmaker Sando Johnson and another family member reportedly sought permission from the Liberian government before leaving the capital. At the same time, Taylor's estranged wife, Bong County senior senator Jewel Howard Taylor who is under a UN travel ban, has asked the UN mission in Liberia to permit her to visit her former husband in Freetown.

04/01/2006 06:56:05

Charles Taylor's Son Arrested in Miami

By LISA ORKIN EMMANUEL
Associated Press Writer

MIAMI - Charles McArthur Emmanuel, son of former Liberian President Charles Taylor, has been arrested by U.S. authorities in Miami, days after his father was handed over to a war crimes tribunal. Emmanuel, a U.S. citizen, led Liberian forces who were responsible for Taylor's security until he went into exile in 2003, according to an affidavit filed in federal court in Miami.

Local Media – Radio Veritas *(News monitored yesterday at 18:45 pm)*

President Lauds Postal Affairs Minister for Curbing Mail Theft

- During a tour of the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications yesterday, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf lauded Posts and Telecommunications Minister Jackson E. Doe for making efforts to curb mail theft at the Ministry. She said that the move was a manifestation of government's desire to minimize corruption.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

President Makes New Appointments

- An Executive Mansion press statement issued in Monrovia yesterday said that President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has made the following appointments: Benedict Matadi as Liberia Water and Sewer Corporation Deputy Managing- Director for Administration; Dr. Foday Kromah as National Oil Company President and Chief Executive Officer; Wilmot Paye as Gender and Development Assistant Minister for Research and Technical Services; and Muriel Nelson as Gender and Development Assistant Minister for Planning and Administration.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Former President Taylor's Family Travels to Sierra Leone

- In a press interview yesterday, Taylor family spokesman Eric Kennedy said that some family members of former President Charles Taylor were expected to travel to Freetown, Sierra Leone to cater to the ex-Liberian leader. The family members include Gebia Taylor-Cassel, Edna Carter, Blake Moore, Marvelyn Kollie, and former Bomi County Senator Sando Johnson.
- Mr. Kennedy added that former President Taylor's former wife, Bong County Senator Jewel Howard-Taylor, has appealed to the United Nations to allow her to travel to Freetown to visit Mr. Taylor.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Ireland Donates US\$4 Million to Liberia's Rebuilding

- In a meeting with President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf yesterday, the head of a visiting delegation from Ireland Mr. Connor Leniham, announced that the Irish government was pledging US\$4 million towards the rebuilding of Liberia.
- Mr. Leniham called on the Liberian government to design projects targeting health, food security, good governance and peace-building to attract Irish aid.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

ELBS RADIO *(News monitored yesterday at 19:00 pm)*

UN Conference Calls for More Women in Peacekeeping

- A statement issued at the end of a United Nations conference on gender, the participants said that there was a need for more women to participate in peacekeeping operations globally.

Complete versions of the UNMIL International Press Clips, UNMIL Daily Liberian Radio Summary and UNMIL Liberian Newspapers Summary are posted each day on the UNMIL Bulletin Board. If you are unable to access the UNMIL Bulletin Board or would like further information on the content of the summaries, please contact Mr. Jeddi Armah at armahj@un.org.

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 31 March 2006

[The media summaries and press clips do not necessarily represent the views of UNMIL.]

International Clips on Liberia

Charles Taylor's wife says the former Liberian president called her from jail

Source: AP WorldStream English (all) Date: March 31, 2006

MONROVIA, Liberia_Ch Charles Taylor's wife said she received a phone call from the former Liberian president Friday morning, and that he was "fine and okay" in detention at a war-crimes court in Sierra Leone. "He says he's okay, and he sounded strong," said Jewel Howard-Taylor, who won a seat in the Liberian Senate in the same elections that brought President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to power in the west African country.

Five members of Taylor's ex-party held in Liberia

MONROVIA, March 31, 2006 (AFP) - Five members of Liberian ex-president Charles Taylor's party are still being held in detention nearly a week after their arrest in Monrovia, a spokesman for the National Patriotic Party (NPP) said Friday.

UN tightens security at Taylor's jail in Sierra Leone

By Rod MacJohnson

FREETOWN, March 31, 2006 (AFP) - The United Nations stepped up security around the compound where Liberia's ex-president Charles Taylor is being detained amid talks to move his trial for crimes against humanity from volatile West Africa to The Hague. Officials at the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone said Irish and Swedish troops, part of a rapid reaction force, were sent from the neighboring UN mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to reinforce security around the tribunal's 11-acre (4.4 hectare) complex.

AP Interview: Chief prosecutor says Taylor trial could take months

By MICHELLE FAUL

Source: AP WorldStream Date: March 31, 2006

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone_The trial of the toppled Liberian president accused of backing a bloody rebellion in his neighbor to the north could take months, according to the chief prosecutor at the special U.N.-backed tribunal that will try Charles Taylor.

BBC Last Updated: Thursday, 30 March 2006, 14:03 GMT 15:03 UK

Liberia press relief over Taylor capture

Newspapers in Liberia heave a sigh of relief over the capture and transfer to Sierra Leone of former President Charles Taylor. Commentators compare him to Adolf Hitler, Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic and brand him a coward. They believe he did untold damage to the country and the region at large, but feel bringing him to justice could help Liberia

move towards a brighter future. Recently-installed President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is praised for her handling of the situation, with one commentator saying she has lived up to her "iron lady" nickname. There is also a plea for the case against Mr Taylor to proceed calmly, less it inflame national passions.

BBC Last Updated: Thursday, 30 March 2006, 14:03 GMT 15:03 UK

Africa press split over Taylor trial

Newspapers across Africa are at odds over the capture and trial of Liberia's former President Charles Taylor, with some believing bringing him to justice is the right way to proceed and brings hope to those who suffered. Others warn it may destabilise Liberia and that President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf runs the risk "of opening Pandora's box". One commentator asks when US President George W Bush and UK Prime Minister Tony Blair will also be brought before a special tribunal for their role in the Iraq war.

"Pappy" Taylor still feared, even behind bars

By Nick Tattersall

FREETOWN, March 31 (Reuters) - Sierra Leoneans are glad to see Africa's most notorious war crimes suspect, ex-Liberian leader Charles Taylor, behind bars but fear his presence could trigger more violence and would prefer to see him tried abroad.

U.S. State Department renews Liberian travel advisory because of instability

Source: AP WorldStream English (all) Date: March 30, 2006

WASHINGTON_The U.S. State Department is renewing a travel warning for American citizens in **Liberia** because of a threat of violence and instability because of recent political and social tension.

THE IRISH TIMES March 31, 2006

Liberia and Sierra Leone to receive 20m in Irish aid

Deaglan de Breadun, Foreign Affairs Correspondent

SIERRA LEONE / LIBERIA: The Government is to provide 20 million to Sierra Leone and Liberia over the next two years. The announcement was made by Minister of State for Irish Aid and Human Rights Conor Lenihan, who is visiting the region. The new funding involves 14 million for Sierra Leone and 6 million for Liberia, "to support the recovery and transition from conflict" in both countries.

Ethiopian Peacekeeping Force in Liberia Back Home

Addis Ababa, Mar 30, 2006 (The Ethiopian Herald/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) --Members of the 124th Brigade of the Ethiopian peacekeeping force which were serving in Liberia for nine months are returning home after completing their mission, the Ministry of Defence said.

International Clips on West Africa

Victims of African despots hope Taylor case sets precedent

By DONNA BRYSON
Associated Press Writer

Source: English Politics News
Date: March 31, 2006

DAKAR, Senegal_A former Chadian military leader accused in the deaths and torture of thousands of opponents lives in this pleasant, seaside capital. A toppled Ethiopian dictator infamous for waging a "Red Terror" campaign has a haven in Zimbabwe. A Ugandan second only to Idi Amin in brutality died in exile without ever having faced trial. When Africans play "Where are they now?" the answer has rarely been "facing justice." Hopes that could change were raised by the surrender to UN-backed war crimes tribunal of Charles Taylor, the former Liberian president accused of greed and savagery extraordinary even for a continent that has known many of the worst tyrants of modern times.

Local Media – Newspapers

Johnson-Sirleaf, Bush and Special Court Want Taylor Tried in The Hague

(The News, The Inquirer, The Analyst, New Democrat, National Chronicle, The Liberian Diaspora, The Informer and The Tribute)

- President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President George Bush and the Special Court for Sierra Leone have called for the transfer of the trial of former President Charles Taylor to the Hague, Netherlands, to safeguard the stability of the sub-region.

Most Newspaper Editorials Support Transfer of Taylor to Special Court

(The News, The Inquirer, The Analyst, New Democrat, The National Chronicle, The Informer, The Tribute and The Liberia Business Digest)

- Editorials in *The News*, *The Inquirer* and *The Informer* said that former President Charles Taylor should be accorded his rights and given a free, fair and speedy trial in an environment that is not hostile. *The Analyst* described Nigeria's handover of Taylor as a victory for diplomacy, saying that leaders should seek partnership in the fight against impunity rather than shield violators of human rights under the pretense of preserving Africa's honor against neocolonialism. According to *New Democrat's* editorial, the entire episode is a triumph for justice and a welcomed defeat for impunity. The Tribute praised President Johnson-Sirleaf for taking the bold decision to close the Taylor matter. Bucking the editorial line of most of the press, *National Chronicle* said that the humiliation of Mr. Taylor was damaging to the image of Liberia since he is a former President.

Bringing Taylor to Justice Is Lesson for Warlords Says UN Secretary-General

(Heritage)

- UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said Wednesday that the capture and trial of former President Charles Taylor would send a powerful message to the region that impunity would not be allowed to stand, and would-be warlords would pay a price.

Political Party decries "Mass Arrests"

(The Liberian Diaspora)

- In a meeting following the arrest and detention of former President Charles Taylor, members of the National Patriotic Party (NPP) denounced what they called "secret arrests" of NPP partisans by state security agents.

Local Media – Radio Veritas *(News monitored yesterday at 18:45 pm)*

President Johnson-Sirleaf Calls on UN to Ensure Taylor Treated with Dignity

- In her address to the nation yesterday, President Ellen Johnson- Sirleaf called on the United Nations to ensure that the dignity and right to a strong self-defence of former President Charles Taylor are upheld during his trial. President Johnson-Sirleaf also called on all those who lived with Mr. Taylor at Calabar to return home.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Former Liberian Leader to Appear Before Special Court Today

- Speaking to journalists in Freetown, Sierra Leone yesterday, Special Court for Sierra Leone Chief Prosecutor Desmond de Silva said that former President Charles Taylor would be arraigned before the Court today to respond to the indictment against him.
- United States President George Bush welcomed Mr. Taylor's arrest and transfer to the Special Court, but called for a UN resolution to transfer Mr. Taylor to the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

President Urges Cabinet to be Credible

- At a ceremony to commission newly appointed cabinet ministers in Monrovia, yesterday, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf urged the appointees to conduct themselves with credibility and transparency, using the principles of good governance, accountability and hard work. She reassured the public that the government will not tolerate corruption.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Millionaire to Invest in Liberian Agriculture Sector

- According to a press statement from the Office of the Vice President yesterday, Jewish millionaire Elijah Getter has expressed interest in investing in Liberia's agriculture and housing sectors with the construction of 1,200 units and rehabilitation of the coffee industry.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Netherlands Sets Preconditions to Host Taylor

- Responding to a request from the Special Court for Sierra Leone seeking the transfer to The Hague of former President Charles Taylor, the Government of Netherlands called on the UN Security Council to pass a resolution mandating the holding of the trial in the Netherlands and guaranteeing that Mr. Taylor will leave the Netherlands after his trial.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

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